

The Afterparty

It was Halloween, after all, so we donned costumes and headed to Harvard Square. ("What are you?" people asked me. I looked them straight in the eye, scrunched up my face to look a little angry, and said "I'm a dot-com millionaire" with utter seriousness. That was my costume.) Alexis carried a sack of candy, Steve a sack of shirts. People in all sorts of bizarre costumes waited for the train.

We grabbed dinner at Border Cafe. Alexis handed out candy and shirts to the waiters while flirting, and offered to bribe them into voting for him in the Halloween costume contest.

I ordered a meal, but couldn't make myself eat it. The food just sort of seemed to stick in my mouth, each swallow painful.

"So what are you going to buy first?" someone asked each of us. When it came to me, I stared blankly. I couldn't think of anything I wanted.

"Who's going to pay for the check?" Steve asked. "Oh, wait. I just realized, for the first time, that it's relevant."

Afterwards, we walked down Church Street back to Harvard Square. There were a bunch of young girls loitering. Alexis struck up a conversation. "Want some candy?" "Yeah!" they all cried. He opened up the pillowcase. "Want some shirts?" "Uh, sure," they laughed, and started fussing over colors and sizes. It was the strangest transformation, two mild-mannered guys suddenly become showmen, a horde of girls at their feet. "It's times like these I wish I was a *Vanity Fair* reporter," I tell Chris.

"What's reddit?" the girls asked as they tried shirts on. "Oh, it used to be a website."

"So why are you girls all just standing here?" "We're waiting for the *Rocky Horror Picture Show!* You should come." "Oh. Well, we were going to go get crunked." "Well, you can get crunked and then come see it!"

We demurred and continued on, finding a flock of well-suited men, visiting from other countries, who fell for the same trick. "I'll have to give this to my daughter."

As we walked to a bar, we passed three young girls in bunny costumes who Alexis tried to pick up. The oldest-looking one wanted to hang out with us, thought it would be fun, started giggling suggestively, a glimmer into a pastime I didn't understand (my feeling is "men suck", on both sides of the equation). But despite her best efforts, her two younger-looking friends shied away and wanted to just go to *Rocky Horror*. There was a struggle, and I saw the girls walking towards the bar and away from it several times after that.

By the time we finally reached the bar, my head was pounding and my stomach was nauseous, and I didn't want to go in, I didn't want to be here, I didn't want to know these people. I went home instead and watched a show about a serial killer and found myself identifying with the lead.

When I woke up the next morning, my head was fuzzy. And while I saw the costumes strewn about the floor, the girls brought home who slept in our living room, the odd emails asking me what I'd do next, I still felt funny. For a shining moment in the morning, it felt as if this whole acquisition thing might have simply been a dream.

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November 2, 2006